

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMCONGEN CALCUTTA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, MORG, BG
SUBJECT: VICTORY DAY CELEBRATION

1. VICTORY DAY, DECEMBER 16, THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SURRENDER OF THE PAKISTAN ARMY AND THE LIBERATION OF BANGLADESH, WAS CELEBRATED WITH ENTHUSIASM IN DACCA. PUBLIC BUILDINGS WERE DECORATED WITH FOLORED LIGHTS AND THE GREEN AND RED BANGLADESHI FLAG FLUTTERED FROM MOST BUILDINGS, BUSES AND RICKSHAWS. EACH NEWSPAPER CONTAINED A SPECIAL VICOTRY DAY SUPPLEMENT WITH PICTURES OF THE ARMY AND STORIES OF THE HISTORY OF THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT. THE BIG EVENT OF THE DAY WAS A PARADE OF SPECIAL UNITS FROM EACH OF THE ARMED SERVICES, THE BANGLADESH RIFLES, POLICE AND VILLAGE DEFENSE FORCES.

2. PREPARATIONS FOR THE PARADE HAD TAKEN PLACE THROUGHOUT THE PREVIOUS WEEK. HEAVY EARTH MOVING MACHINES HAD GRADED AND SMOOTHED THE FIELDS IN FRONT OF THE SECOND CAPITAL, THE UNFINISHED BUT IMPOSING MASS OF CONCRETE
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WHICH WAS TO HAVE BEEN THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING FOR AN UNDIVIDED PAKISTAN. DOZENS OF TRUCKS HAD BROUGHT SOLDIERS INTO DACCA FROM OUTLYING CAMPS. LOUDSPEAKERS HAD BEEN INSTALLED AND BARKED INSTRUCTIONS INCESSANTLY TO SOLDIERS WHO PRACTICED MARCHING UP AND DOWN THE STREETS.

3. THURSDAY, THE MORNING OF THE PARADE, WAS PERFECT. THE SUN WAS BRILLIANT AND THE AIR COOL. CROWDS LINED THE BROAD BOULEVARD TO WATCH COMPANY AFTER COMPANY OF TROOPS MARCH PAST. OF THE THREE OR FOUR THOUSAND SERVICE-MEN MARCHING, MANY WORE GREEN OR BLUE BERETS WITH THEIR KHAKI UNIFORMS WHILE OTHER UNITS WORE CAMOFLAGE UNIFORMS. THE NAVY WORE CRISP WHITE UNIFORMS AND THE AIRFORCE WORE BLACK. ON THE MEDIAN SEPARATING THE SECTIONS OF THE BOULEVARD, ARMY BAND DRUMMERS VIGOROUSLY MAINTAINED A STEADY BEAT WHILE BAGPIPES ADDED A FESTIVE SOUND.

4. AT FIRST GLANCE, THE SIGHT WAS IMPRESSIVE INDEED. IT WAS A BIT SURPRISING IN THIS POOR COUNTRY TO SEE LINES OF SOLDIERS MARCHING PAST, EACH MAN WEARING A WELL-PRESSED UNIFORMED AND MOST CARRYING A RIFLE WITH FIXED BAYONET. BUT AT A CLOSER LOOK, ONE BEGAN TO NOTICE THAT THE LINES WERE NOT TOO STRAIGHT, THE SOLDIER'S ARMS DID NOT SWING IN UNISON AND HALF THE SOLDIERS (MANY JUST TEENAGERS) CONTINUALLY STOLE GLANCES AT THE PEOPLE WATCHING THEM. BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF THE MARCHING, HOWEVER, WAS ENTHUSIASTIC, THE CRITICAL DETAILS HARDLY SEEMED TO MATTER. IN A SOMEWHAT IRREGULAR WAY, THE SOLDIERS DID STRUT WITH PRIDE.

5. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH GENERAL ZIA DID NOT MAKE A VICTORY DAY ADDRESS, PRESIDENT SAYEM ISSUED A BRIEF STATEMENT CALLING ON THE NATION "TO HOLD ALOFT NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY" THROUGH "DEEP PATRIOTISM AND BOLD ENDEAVORS". NEITHER PRESIDENT SAYEM NOR ANY OF THE NEWS-PAPERS MADE MORE THAN PASSING REFERENCE TO INDIA'S ROLE IN THE NATIONAL LIBERATION. THE CURRENT DISPUTES WITH INDIA ALSO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WENT GENERALLY UNMENTIONED. PAKISTAN, NATURALLY, CAME IN FOR SOME INDIRECT CRITICISM BUT EVEN THIS WAS AS MUTED AS IT COULD BE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

6. THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION SEEMED FULLY AWARE OF THE VALUE OF A GOOD SHOW. THE CELEBRATION OF VICTORY DAY WAS AN OLD-FASHIONED ATTEMPT TO BOOST NATIONAL PRIDE BY FLYING THE FLAG AND DISPLAYING THE ARMED FORCES AT THEIR CEREMONIAL BEST.
MASTERS

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